

CATHEDRAL CONNECTIONS

Issue #4 ▪ June 11, 2020



It doesn't seem possible that we started this newsletter almost three months ago as a means of staying in touch with each other during the spread of COVID-19. And here we are still going! The virus spread has decreased (at least for now) but the longing to be back together again in the Cathedral is increasing and a team of Cathedral folks are busy working on plans that may permit that to happen.

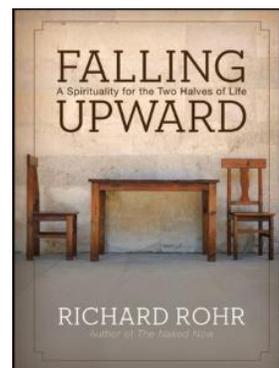
In this issue, we are going to take a look at how the video conferencing program "Zoom" and other such tools have impacted our lives.

Zoom has possibly become the most oft-used word for many members of our congregation over the past few months! While we may no longer be zooming around outside, the amount of inside zooming has increased exponentially! We can zoom to Bible study, zoom to Sunday services, zoom to Taizé services, zoom to meetings of all kinds and even zoom to dinner parties! Admittedly, zooming places this way was a bit intimidating for many of us at first, but it has become much less so over time and has helped us through this quarantine in ways we could never have imagined.

Zooming to Bible Study

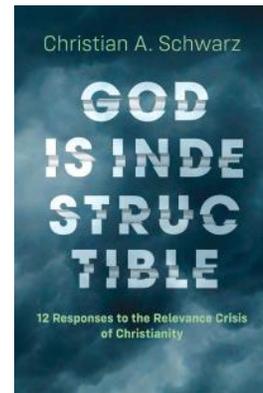
Every Thursday evening for the past several years, a small group of women known as the "Chosen Chicks" have gathered together in each other's homes for Bible Study. Led by Kathleen Snow, the group consists of a mix of females from different walks of life and church affiliations. Over the years, those Thursday evening meetings have become special to the members. Thus, when COVID-19 lockdowns began, not to be deterred, the "Chicks" became Zoomers.

Using the Zoom app, not a single meeting was missed! The group is currently studying a book by Father Richard Rohr called *Falling Upward*. The book has been challenging to say the least but it led to great and lengthy discussions. Initially, there was concern that it would be difficult to meet and carry on discussions using an app like Zoom. This was not the case at all. The video and audio functions worked great! Group members will be happy to return to face to face meetings in the fall if permitted, but if not, the Zoom experience will continue to see them through. In fact, even if face to face meetings are back on, Zoom may eliminate future snowstorm cancellations!



What do you get when you combine Google Classroom and Zoom?

Back in late March, Dean Geoffrey issued an invitation for the Cathedral congregation to join him in a study group focused on the book *God is indestructible: 12 Responses to the Relevance Crisis* by Christian A. Schwarz. Approximately 12 congregation members accepted Dean Geoffrey's invitation and gathered, using Google Classroom and Zoom, for seven afternoons. The book is a call for change. It shows how the shifts in this epoch of history have the power to anchor and expand our spirituality and service to others.



The following are observations on the book from some members of the study:

Cheryl Jacobs: What most surprised me is that Schwarz presents the theses in his book as provocative ideas in this time, and many agreed that this was so. I see this as a confirmation, perhaps, of how poorly we are communicating the basics of our faith both within and outside the church. How do we both encourage and hold each other accountable to grow up in our faith? Doing so will also help to lessen the unhealthy expectations that clergy (or even lay readers) do it "all". Together we have been given a mission to share God's love and transcendence, and individually, we each have a part in that. As someone put it, we need to shape an environment where outsiders say "God is among you". Schwarz's points are important ideas to talk about. I enjoyed and found it helpful to discuss in small groups. My hope is that we can continue these types of studies post-COVID-19.

Harry Palmer: Recently I took part with other Cathedral congregation members in a discussion of the book *God is Indestructible* by Christian A. Schwarz. It was a very instructional read and resulted in great discussion. Schwarz, who has conducted 2500 surveys with Christian congregations worldwide, has some very solid insights into the Church and what works and what doesn't. Some things which we all believe to be true, he has found are not. An example of this is that Fundamentalist churches are the only ones growing. He maintains churches that are growing are quality churches and goes on to elaborate what these churches are about. Another discussion of interest to me was on science and faith. I have long felt that there was no conflict and Schwarz quite clearly demonstrates that you can be a person of reason and of faith. An area of particular interest was that of church leadership. The leadership model most of us have grown up with that the Priest is the leader in all matters, leads to many issues. The model that Jesus gives us of Servant leader is one that more effectively meets the needs of the church. Schwarz states what this looks like. Schwarz also talks about how the shift in how people think and worship all over the world provides many challenges, but he turns that around and says this shift is an opportunity for the church to look for new ways to meet the needs of a changing world. Are we up for it? These are only a few of the themes touched on in the book. It is well worth the read. As I mentioned, I very much enjoyed reading and discussing this book with others in the congregation. I would recommend the book to all those who are interested in the future of the church and having some previously held "everybody knows" ideas challenged by solid research.

Bonnie Greenwood: The book was very interesting and thought-provoking. Early on, the author stated that it is time of change. For many of us, that is not easy but Christian Schwarz says the time is now. "Whoever wants Christianity to continue as it is, doesn't want it to continue." The Zoom meeting format was a great opportunity for a convenient way to participate in the daily read-along and discussion time.

Catherine MacDonald: I found this book exciting and full of thought-provoking perspectives on the church and world today. I thoroughly enjoyed both reading it and our daily discussions of each chapter. Now the challenge comes: to find a way from discussion to action.

Dalton London: First of all I must thank Geoffrey, our Dean, for organizing this study based on Christian Schwarz's, *God is Indestructible*. Apart from the content of the material, it was a very good experience from the socializing point of view, providing contact with fellow parishioners, many of whom with which we have nothing more than fleeting greetings. The obvious benefits of the content, an analysis of the present crisis in the church in the face of declining commitments on the part of so-called Christians throughout the Western world and the consequent apparent lack of relevance in a secular, materialistic world-view, Schwarz gives practical advice as to how the church can become relevant and how we can convey Jesus's message and means of salvation to those with whom we come in contact in our daily lives. I, personally, was affirmed in my solid commitment to making faith a part of my daily walk in an ever-changing society and to the notion that we Christians should not compartmentalize our lives, separating the spiritual and the non-spiritual; that the formula 10\90 should be foreign to the experience of a Christian. God is transcendent and we should claim his omnipotence through his Holy Spirit in all our activities.

Andre Vietinghoff: It was meaningful in the week before Pentecost to participate in the study of the book in Christianity *God is indestructible: 12 Responses to the Relevance Crisis* by C. Schwarz. Dean Geoffrey did a marvelous job in setting up the technical aspects of the meeting both with Google Classroom and Zoom, in providing study notes for each session, and in summarizing the chapters each day. There were many important concepts that church leaders and members who want their churches to grow should consider. Personally, in the hope of a better understanding of God, I plan to go back to study the chapter on Gods Energy. God bless!

Jim Morell: This book is a very worthwhile read. In it, Christian Schwarz offers research data and ideas that he believes will help individuals and congregations see why today's churches are out of sync with cultural realities and the expectations of younger generations. While he put forward many solid facts and excellent ideas, the one that struck me the most is this: the church of the future has to help people see – through the Bible – how an "energetic" God can and should be part of everyone's everyday life. We, the church, have to help those who are willing to grow in faith to see that God is relevant in today's cultural issues and challenges. I thought one of the best quotes from the book is this: "It's time for change! Whoever wants Christianity to continue as is, doesn't want it to continue." Change – yes! But "Change to become what?" is the question that is difficult to answer.

Seeing, Sharing, and the Spirit

A reflection by Kirsten McKnight:

Connecting through Taizé worship on Thursday evenings has been a wonderful way for our family of four to feel a sense of community during this time of social distancing. Brad and I have two daughters (Charlotte and Claire) who are 10 and 13, and they have grown up in the Cathedral. They know and love so many of the people we worship with, and it has been strange not to have that 'village' physically present in our lives each week. Taizé worship via Zoom allows us to connect with those smiling faces and kind hearts.

Each session on Zoom begins and ends with participants having a brief social chat. It's been wonderful to see the faces of our friends from Sunday services, and become familiar with those we didn't know prior to the pandemic. Typically, online Taizé worship has between 20-30 participants logged on from several provinces (and recently, our first participant from the USA). Worship is led by Kurt, Catherine and Rachel Schmidt, who share scripture, thoughtful meditations and reflections, beautiful artwork to contemplate as we pray, and lovely prayer chants. The half-hour service on Thursdays at 5:30 is a welcome opportunity in our lives to sit and reflect on God's love.



Throughout the pandemic, faith communities have been innovative in creating ways to help people feel connected and supported although we cannot physically be together. Live-streamed and recorded worship services, chat groups, phone trees, newsletters, online Bible studies and meetings are all parts of the web that will continue to connect us until it is safe to be together again. We feel blessed to have the opportunity to participate in online Taizé as part of our at-home worship, and encourage others to join in as well.

Taizé is held online each Thursday evening. Just before 5:30, open the event on the Cathedral web calendar for details to join the worship service held through Zoom.

You may join with video, or simply listen.

Please remember our continuing ministry in your prayers, especially those tasked with making plans for our future efforts to make in person worship available. A complexity of considerations are required and volunteers will be needed to put the requirements in place.

On our website:

The bulletin and video link to Sunday worship (updated weekly), Bishop and Chapter notes, mission updates, an edition of 'Cathedral Faces' featuring Fran Miles, and an article from the Anglican Journal entitled, *On not singing the Lord's song*.

Thank you for reading Cathedral Connections #4. We wish you all God's blessings!

If you would like to contribute to a future edition of this newsletter, please email <legresleygail at gmail.com>

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Stay tuned and stay connected!

